

Thursday, February 5, 2009, 8pm
 Friday, February 6, 2009, 8pm
 Saturday, February 7, 2009, 2pm & 8pm
 Sunday, February 8, 2009, 3pm
 Zellerbach Hall

Circus Oz



Rob Blackburn

30th Birthday Bash!

Cal Performances' 2008–2009 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo Bank.

Circus Oz

Performers

Svetlana Bunic	Michael Lira
Scott Hone	Justin McGinley
Flip Kammerer	Paul O'Keeffe
Ben Lewis	Rockie Stone
Jacqui Levy	Julia Watt
Michael Ling	Nicci Wilks

Production Staff

Chad Albinger	<i>Rigger</i>
Michael Baxter	<i>Props Builder & Set Designer</i>
Antonella Casella	<i>Artistic Associate</i>
Tim Coldwell	<i>Founding Member, Show Director</i>
Joe Ferguson	<i>Sound Engineer</i>
Mike Finch	<i>Artistic Director</i>
Laurel Frank	<i>Costume Designer</i>
Josh Green	<i>Touring Production Manager</i>
Suzi Hayes	<i>Operations & Tour Manager</i>
Cath Hedge	<i>Stage Manager</i>
Derek Ives	<i>Touring Show Director</i>
Margaret Murray	<i>Production Manager</i>
Marko Respondeck	<i>Lighting Design & Operation</i>
Pete Sanders	<i>Rigger</i>
Emil Wolk	<i>Guest Director & Comic Genius</i>

Office Staff

Lesley Adeney	<i>Administrator</i>
Ali Barker	<i>Marketing & Communications Director</i>
Rebecca Czapnick	<i>Director of International Market Development</i>
Matthew Hughes	<i>Programming Director</i>
Robyn McGregor	<i>Digital Marketing Manager</i>
Linda Mickleborough	<i>General Manager</i>
Tara Sanders	<i>Classes Coordinator</i>
Annie Stephens	<i>Community & Corporate Programs Coordinator</i>
Nhi Tran	<i>Finance Administrator</i>
Dani Venn	<i>Marketing & Communications Coordinator</i>

Please do not take flash photos or film during the show, as it is dangerous and the performers may fall down and ruin your picture. We may need to make a change to the cast in the event of illness or other unavoidable cause.

Program Act Descriptions

Sway Pole: Well, it's a pole, eight meters tall, and it sways. Sound simple? Of course, you have to get up first...try wobbling on one of these for 10 minutes. Then try it while doing a handstand.

Circus Oz Debut: Lingy in 2004.

Danger Factor: Gravity, the dreaded wobbles and motion sickness.

Aerial Straps: Aerial Straps are strips of canvas hung from the ceiling. To perform on them requires tremendous upper-body strength and calloused hands.

Circus Oz Debut: Ben Lewis in 2006.

Aerial Tissu: Aerial Tissu is a curtain of silken material, which requires the ability to transform acts of great strength into graceful movement.

Circus Oz Debut: Flea in 2002.

Danger Factor: Self-preservation depends on complicated wrapping techniques and a strong set of shoulder muscles.

Inline Skating: This year, Circus Oz expands its repertoire to include something new from the streets of Melbourne (and Albury, home of our brand-new skater girl). We can verify that somersaults in skates are not impossible.

Circus Oz Debut: Flip in 2008.

Danger Factor: All that safety gear is not for show.

Trapeze: Trapezes, and the trapeze act, come in all shapes and sizes. Circus Oz has done everything from flying trapeze, which involved flying through space from a trapeze to a catcher, to static doubles, which usually sees a combination of grace and strength as two people climb around each other and their apparatus. The classic modern trapeze act is the swinging trapeze. A more recent version is called cloudswing, which is an elegantly slung rope. Sometimes they can be seen hanging from the rope by their toes.

Circus Oz Debut: Jane Mullet with Stephen Champion in 1979; *Solo:* Gail Coulton in 1984.

Danger Factor: Missing the bar can leave an aerialist very highly strung.

Pole: A skill we mostly learnt from a Chinese genius called Lu Guang Rong, the pole is a spectacular act which can be performed solo, duo or in groups.

Circus Oz Debut: Leapers in 1984.

Danger Factor: Landing on your head.

Rim: Imagine using your body to keep a giant spinning top continuously spinning...by performing acrobatics inside it.

Circus Oz Debut: Nicci Wilks in 2008.

Danger Factor: Rolling off the stage...or over your foot.

Teeterboard: This act is acrobatics on hyperdrive. A giant see-saw propels acrobats high into the air with enormous force, and they still manage to twist in all sorts of carefully judged, spectacular directions.

Circus Oz Debut: Leapers in 1984.

Danger Factor: Gravity and sweaty palms.

Hoop Diving: This is acrobatics with precision hyperdrive. Precariously balanced bamboo hoops sit atop each other as acrobats dive through them in an array of increasingly implausible moves the hoops are gradually stacked higher and higher....

Circus Oz Debut: Leapers in 1984.

Danger Factor: Bruises and fallen hoops.

Group Bike: Get someone fairly brave to ride a *very* strong bike around and around in a circle. Stacks on!

Circus Oz Debut: Men's bicycle brigade in 1980.

Danger Factor: Getting your pants caught in the chain.

Juggling: Juggling presents many possibilities. From bouncing seven tiny white balls on a small piece of marble, to tossing clubs in the air while executing back somersaults, to tossing an array of clubs between an array of people in lots and lots of different patterns.

Circus Oz Debut: The original mob in 1978.

Danger Factor: Losing count, or losing a club and watching it fly towards your partner's head.

Hula Hoops: Circus Oz takes the humble hula hoop to a whole new level—spinning more than one at a time is a skill that takes hours of practice every day for years, and requires incredible muscle control.

Circus Oz Debut: Karina in 1999.

Danger Factor: Ever smack yourself on the nose with one of these? They're also hard to manage as carry-on luggage.

Touring: It takes enormous fortitude to stay on the road, and in the air, for most of the year. There's the horrible food, the dehydration, the little bottles of gin....

First Circus Oz tour: In 1980, Circus Oz set off to Sydney, Papua New Guinea and Europe for the first time.

Danger Factor: Let's not even go there!

Musicians: The music is the colourful heart of the show. Everyone plays at least a little bit. The band at its core has no limits. All music is originally composed individually and collectively by the band and is created to fit the acts, sometimes following the mood, sometimes driving it along.

Circus Oz Debut: The original mob in 1978.

Danger Factor: Daredevil drum sticks flying in the eyes.



Rob Blackburn

Introduction

When Soapbox Circus and the New Ensemble Circus merged in 1978, Circus Oz was born. As one of the world's very first full-scale contemporary circuses, all the animals involved were human (although suspicious kangaroos and flocks of flying cockatoos have been sighted on stage from time to time). The show grabbed traditional circus skills, like trapeze, juggling and high wire, and flung them together with live music and a blatant disregard for the impossible—to create something entirely original. The critics called it post-modern. The performers kept their tongues firmly jammed in cheeks. Circus Oz, in its combination of hilarity and intelligence, spectacle, irony, beauty and—yes, occasionally dagginess—could only come from Australia. It wears its collective heart on its sleeve, passionately supporting gender equity and social justice but always combined with a good pratfall.

In the beginning they were a collective and the company did everything, fixing up the battered old trucks they toured in and sitting down between shows to sew their first canvas tent on borrowed sewing machines. Now they tour with shipping containers, a gang of highly skilled supporting crew and a state of the art tent (the one you might be sitting in). But they have never lost their commitment to that original spirit of multi-skilling and anarchic but disciplined creativity. Lynden, their resident truckie who leads the fleet

of semi-trailers when they travel overland, is also the guy with the Laughing Clowns in the front-of-house tent. Matt, who programs tours, is always a dab hand at turning somersaults on the trampoline if called upon.

Circus Oz has struck an acrobatic chord with audiences from Hobart to Arnhem Land, from Fremantle to the Sydney Opera House and all points in between. And since 1980 they have toured to 26 countries across five continents, where in each place, inevitably, audiences have never seen anything quite like it before. They have played sell out seasons on 42nd Street in New York, one-off gigs at refugee camps on the West Bank; they have performed at the Royal Festival Hall in London, the Tivoli in Copenhagen, in a tent erected in the Plaza de Toros Monumental in Barcelona and another in a walled compound in Bogota where the crowds almost rioted to get in, even, like a scene from a magic realist novel, in a glass opera house in the Brazilian rainforest. As they say, people seemed to like it and one thing led to another...

This show, like every Circus Oz performance in 30 years, will be a once off. When the performers meet the audience and the band kicks into gear, you never know exactly what will happen...that's the sheer joy of it. Happy Birthday, Circus Oz!

David Carlin

Performers



Ben Lewis (*performer*) began his career in the circus at the tender age of seven, when he walked through the doors of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus based in his hometown of Albury. Ben took to hard training and practice with great enthusiasm and went on to complete 10 years with the company. Since graduating from NICA in 2004, Ben has been working as a freelance performer in circus companies around Australia and abroad.

Circus Oz Debut: Hobart, 2006.

Favorite Circus Moment: Riding around New York City in limousines on my 16th birthday after opening night with the Flying Fruit Fly Circus at the New Victory 1999.



Julia Watt (*musician*) has always enjoyed hitting things, but no one ever believed she would make a career out of it. Since her first drum lesson in 1995, Julia has been on many musical adventures, including a four months tour of the Middle East with an all-girl cover band.

Circus Oz Debut: Newman, 2007.

Favorite Circus Moment: Auditioning for Circus Oz in February 2007 and then being offered the job!



Flip Kammerer (*performer*) is a born and bred bush baby from Albury, where she began her circus career with the Flying Fruit Circus. She is a multi-skilled acrobat, tumbler, circus trainer, performer, musician, skater and break-dancer. Flip has been fortunate to have experienced a great deal, from performing on Broadway, New York, to competing in extreme sports.

Circus Oz Debut: Melbourne, 2008.

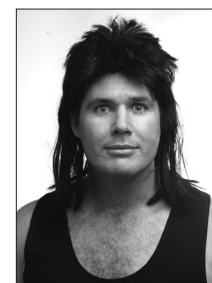
Favorite Circus Moment: The rush of flying off the teeterboard and watching the sunset on top of the Big Top after a season wraps up.



After completing an apprenticeship in carpentry and an honors degree in psychology, **Justin McGinley** (*performer*) began his career as a street performer. Since then he has performed at festivals, cabaret and stand up venues throughout the world and has written, directed and produced Am Dilemma. Justin recently finished touring with Circus Royale.

Circus Oz Debut: Wujal Wujal, 2008.

Favorite Circus Moment: Looking through the curtains, just moments before the show begins, to find a full house and electrifying energy.

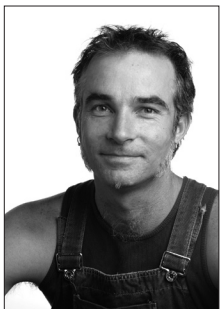


Scott Hone (*performer*) started doing sweet tricks on his BMX when he was 14. On his way to becoming a self proclaimed all-round nice guy and chick magnet, he finished his degree in computing science, taught high-school mathematics, moved to the big city and had his bike nicked. Scott is a performer from way back. He did his first standup routine in front of a public audience aged 11. He has done a lot of stuff

since then. His preferred mode of transport is his beloved scooter. He can go really fast on it.

Circus Oz Debut: Sydney, 2003.

Favorite Circus moment: That time in the show when the audience is entering the tent—full of excitement and anticipation—and knowing that they do not know what to expect.



Michael Ling (*performer*), known as “Lingy,” started young, joining the Flying Fruit Fly Circus at the age of nine. He has spent the past 20 years performing all over the world with Circus Oz, with the odd break to renovate his house and try his hand at rigging.

Circus Oz Debut: Melbourne, 1986.

Favorite Circus Moment: In New York, after being told we had to do the show without Tim Coldwell as his visa was delayed. At a critical moment, in walked Tim. Hooray!



Heavily inspired by B-grade horror and early cartoon music, **Michael Lira** (*multi-instrumentalist, composer*) has developed a unique style of composition that has led to a wide array of work across various mediums including circus, theatre, feature films and television shows.

Circus Oz Debut: Melbourne, 2008.

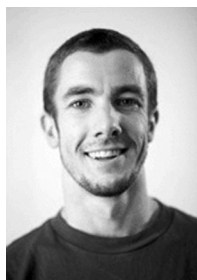
Favorite Circus Moment: The time when Celia Curtis, ring master of Circus Bizarre, while performing at the Enmore theatre, summoned a heckler onto the stage, slapped him in the face and then made him publicly apologize for his rude comments in front of 600 people.



Beginning her performing career with the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, **Nicci Wilks** (*performer*) has since strutted her skills around the world, performing in nine different languages. Companies she has worked with include Melbourne Theatre

Company, Circa, Dislocate, Circus Monoxide, Hothouse Theatre, Born in a Taxi and The Humour Foundation. Training in Paris, Montreal, Germany and Norway, Nicci is/has been a circus artiste, clown doctor, wheel enthusiast, drag king, tent boss, Shakespearean actor, singer in a band and a musical, stage manager, production manager, tour manager...

Circus Oz Debut: Sydney, 1988.



Performing since age 11, **Paul O’Keeffe** (*performer*) has toured the world performing in theatre, circus, dance and puppetry. Paul is a co-creator of extreme circus company KRONIK that blends the traditional format of circus with hip-hop beats, MC-ing and skate culture and has graduated from the National Institute of Circus Arts.

Circus Oz Debut: Wujal Wujal, 2008.

Favorite Circus Moment: Watching a traditional circus show at age nine, when the elephant decided not to perform and after seeing a gap in the tent made his way out, roaming the streets of Canberra. The show went on.



Rockie Stone (*performer*) began her performance career at age four with a pair of ballet shoes and a poodle costume. After completing a zoological science degree, Rockie began exploring the realm of circus and quickly moved to performing freelance. A graduate of the National

Institute of Circus Arts, Rockie has worked as a core ensemble member of Circa in Brisbane and performed at festivals throughout Australia and in Shanghai.

Circus Oz Debut: Hong Kong, 2007.

Favorite Circus Moment: Watching people press up into a handstand for the first time—reminding me of my first press handstand. A magical thing to learn to do!



Jacqui Levy’s (*performer*) love of performance began when she was a child, traveling with her family in an old Bedford bus, and completing her schooling via correspondence. It was during this time that she began learning traditional bush poetry and busking on

the dusty streets at folk festivals. In 2002, Jacqui completed a Bachelor of Arts in drama and a Bachelor of Secondary Education at Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane. Jacqui later graduated from the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA) in 2006. Since graduating from NICA, Jacqui has performed around the world from the La Piste Festival in Belgium to a London-based circus musical funded by the British Arts Council.

Circus Oz Debut: Hong Kong, 2007.

Favorite Circus Moment: Watching Sosi (Circus Oz performer Sosina Wogayehu) perform bounce-ball juggling when I was a school teacher with the Fruit Fly school, as it inspired me to pursue a whole new career.



Giving the piano accordion a good name since 1993, **Svetlana Bunic** (*music director, composer*) has been squeezing life into a treasury of musical styles. Recognized for her ongoing work with the multi-ARIA-winning group Monsieur Camembert,

Christa Hughes (*Sleepless Beauty, Temptation, Go-Go Burlesco*), DARTH Vegas and Ukes of Hazzard, Svetlana is now pursuing her musical magic with Circus Oz.

First Gig with Circus Oz: Cardiff, 2005.

Favorite Circus Moment: Performing, playing and jamming with the kids in remote Aboriginal communities around Australia and doing the same with the urban mob in Mexico in 2007.